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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006848

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MARR MASS MCAP PM JO

SUBJECT: STREAMLINING THE JORDAN ARMED FORCES

REF: A. AMMAN 5849

- 1B. IIR 6 853 0072 05
- 1C. IIR 6 853 0148 05
- 1D. IIR 6 853 0156 05
- 1E. IIR 6 853 0165 05

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: The Jordan Armed Forces are seeking to re-make themselves as a smaller, more highly-skilled force. It remains to be seen whether this will be a less-expensive force. Some of the military's traditional social welfare and political functions will be hard to shed at a time of belt-tightening across the government. End Summary.

12. (C) With a serious fiscal crisis forcing the civilian side of the GOJ to tighten its belt (ref A), more cost-cutting and modernizing changes could be coming soon for the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) (refs B-E.) The JAF has already taken some bold steps to turn itself into a lighter force. For example, it has placed into long-term storage much armor, artillery, and other heavy equipment that is no longer necessary, given the JAF's present needs and future threat assessment. At the same time, the JAF is reducing recruitment of low-skilled infantrymen in order to focus on building a smaller number of better-trained units. King Abdullah has spoken to Charge Hale of reducing total JAF manpower from about 110,000 to 90,000.

Review and Reform

13. (C) The JAF is undergoing a review process, similar to the U.S. Department of Defense's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), in an effort to overhaul the Jordanian military and align the JAF with King Abdullah's efforts to cut public expenditures. Post's Defense Attach Office (DAO) is moderately confident that some level of real reform will take place; however, it remains to be seen whether these changes will translate into reduced expenses and a lower overall defense budget, or increases in efficiency without real cost savings.

14. (C) JAF leadership is preparing to present to the King plans for a military that can respond rapidly and be deployed quickly. This review was scheduled for presentation during early July, but has been postponed several times. Some of the issues under consideration: 1) consolidation of resources; 2) the extent to which communications systems need to be upgraded and made more interoperable; 3) the impact of potential reforms on recruiting, training, and promotions; and 4) increased inter-service cooperation among military branches. Senior JAF officials have told us they are committed to reforming promotions procedures from automatic length of service or time-in-grade promotions to advancement based on merit, regardless of time spent in the military. Senior JAF leadership also says it wants to increase the role of women in the military beyond the traditional administrative and nursing functions in which they are still concentrated. (Note: Post has been informed that recommendations for 40 new positions for women ranging from enlisted personnel up to the general officer level will be included in the JAF's review. End Note.)

15. (C) DAO contacts explain that the JAF's review for the King has been postponed primarily to incorporate comments from the British military. We understand that British officers, who were asked by King Abdullah to oversee the review process, were very critical of their Jordanian counterparts after being briefed on JAF reform plans. They argued that the JAF focused too heavily on hardware to the detriment of strategic planning and internal reform.

Political and Social Service Functions

16. (C) The GOJ will no doubt move cautiously, however, because of the likely political and economic consequences of some of the reform proposals. The JAF has traditionally served an important role in the monarchy's alliance with Jordan's East Bank minority. Its officer corps has provided careers for many loyal East Bank families, and its enlisted ranks have been part of the social safety net, an employer of

last resort for both tribesmen and East Bank townsfolk. This is, of course, an expensive way to provide services to economically challenged loyalists. Finding alternative means to carry out some of the JAF's social and political functions will prove a challenge for the GOJ. DAO Amman is encouraging the JAF to focus this review more on further consolidation of its resources, and ways to better utilize USG funding and programs in an effort to reach its goals. The ultimate success of the review process will depend on the magnitude of cut-backs and reforms it recommends, and the King's reaction to it.

HENZEL